

Local War of 1812 veterans recognized posthumously



Isaac Ferriss's decedents gather for a photo following the unveiling of a plaque recognizing their forefather as a veteran of the War of 1812.

by Jennifer Cranston

It has been 200 years since the War of 1812 touched the shores of Lake Erie and drew our citizens into conflict with American neighbours, and last Saturday two of those citizens were recognized and honoured by their decedents and the community.

Local historians and descendants gathered at

two graves in Harrow for short ceremonies recognizing Isaac Ferriss who is buried at St. Andrew's Anglican Church and William Hutchins who is buried at Hutchins Pioneer Cemetery on Cornwall Beach Rd.

It was an emotional day for Yvonne Craig. She is the three-time great-granddaughter of William Hutchins. Hutchins grew up in a military family and they moved around a lot.

"I had no roots, no history," she said.

It wasn't until her parents moved back to the Essex County area that she discovered the roots she longed for. She believes that people have "an inherent sense of needing to belong," and feels that that was lacking in her life.

She has learned she has relatives in the area she had never met, and that her ancestors were prominent founding citizens of the area.

She once met her great uncle in passing on the streets of Leamington. She told him that his eyes reminded her of her grandmother's and discovered that he was that grandmother's brother.

A friend of her mother's

is a member of the Harrow Early Immigrant Research Society and has started Hutchins on the path of discovering her roots. She admits that Saturday's ceremony was a little emotionally overwhelming for her.

Part of the program included reenactors explaining a little about the uniforms, gear and lifestyle of the era. Ferriss began in the British Army but soon quit to join Caldwell's Rangers. Caldwell's Rangers fought alongside Chief Tecumseh and the Potawatomi and Wyandot Nations. It was explained that the militia group was "able to do things the British military could not, things that wouldn't be sanctioned by the British government." Essentially the Rangers often engaged in what

might be called "blatant opps" today.

Paul Nicholson is a descendant of both the soldiers honoured Saturday. He spoke about the benefits of the Government program that enabled the laying of plaques.

"One of the benefits of the project will be a genealogical data base of information that was previously available," explained, adding there was no recognition of veterans at the end of the war. A medal was made but the veterans were numerous and the cost was so high that the medals had been created were melted down, reshaped into coins, and donated to charitable groups the day. An image of the original medal appears on the plaque.

